

MINORITIES IN PAKISTAN

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"You are free; you are free to go to your temples; you are free to go to your mosques or to any other places of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed—that has nothing to do with the business of the State."

Mahomed Ali Jinnah

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PREFACE

On August 14, 1947, when Pakistan emerged as a free nation, it must have been in the minds of many a non-Muslim whether there would be room for his own faith in a State that had come into being pre-eminently because the Muslims of the sub-continent had demanded and fought for a homeland wherein they could lead a life of their own based on a common religion and a common ideology.

It was, however, soon found by Hindus, Christians, Parsis and Buddhists alike that one of the principles of Islam was active religious tolerance—not sufferance, but an actual freedom to practise the tenets and rites of their faith in every respect.

The Muslims of Pakistan are, in fact, deeply conscious of the valuable contribution which their non-Muslim compatriots have made, and continue to make, towards enriching national life socially, economically and politically.

HINDUS IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan has a substantial minority population. According to the Census of 1961, minorities constitute 11.9 per cent of the entire population of the country. They consist mainly of Hindus, Christians, Parsis and Buddhists. The bulk of the Hindus live in East Pakistan, where they constitute about 23 per cent of the population. In the Chittagong Hill Tracts, they even form the majority of the population. It may be pointed out that, outside India, the largest number of Hindus live in Pakistan, though substantial numbers of Hindus are to be found in Burma, Malaysia, South Africa, East Africa and Indonesia. Another notable fact is that the majority of the Buddhists of the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent live in Pakistan, not in India, the original birthplace of Buddhism.

These minorities occupy an honourable place in Pakistan's national life. Politically, they enjoy equal status with the Muslims. All adult members of the minority communities have the right to vote and are

not debarred, on the basis of religion, caste or creed, from any position in the national life.

The Hindus had a number of political organisations which are now defunct, as these were not reorganised after the ban on political parties was lifted by the present Government. But the Hindu community is properly represented in the legislature and in the Basic Democracies.

Among the prominent Hindu leaders of East Pakistan, the name of Babu Bhobhani Shankar Biswas is outstanding. He is the Minister for Health in the Governor's Council of Ministers. Besides Mr. Biswas, the other prominent Hindu leaders are Mr. Bhupesh Chandra Nandi, Mr. Khagendra Chandra Chakravarty, Mr. Sunil Basu, Dr. M.N. Nandi, Mr. D.N. Barori, Dr. G.C. Dev, Mr. B.S. Biswas, Mr. Rasharaj Mandal and Mrs. Nell Sengupta.

The Hindus get due representation in the Public Services as well as the Judiciary. In the sphere of education, the Hindus play an important role as heads of departments in the universities, as principals and professors in the colleges and as teachers in all types of educational institutions.

Economic Life

The Hindu community occupies an important position in the economic life of East Pakistan. There were a fairly large number of Hindu *Zamindars* (landlords) before the abolition of *Zamindari* (Feudalism) in East Pakistan. In the commercial and industrial spheres of East Pakistan, they still play a very important part. They own a large number of textile mills in East Pakistan. They control a large share of the import and export business of the Province. In banking their influence is still felt in the commercial circles of the Province. They also own



Image of goddess Saraswati, one of the Hindu deities.



Hindus worshipping in a temple in Sukkur, West Pakistan.

considerable shares in different fields of commerce and industry, such as cinema, jute and cement. Their participation in the cottage industries and agriculture is equally notable.

The Hindus, like other minorities of Pakistan, are absolutely free to fashion their lives according to their own culture. In an address to the Nation, broadcast from Radio Pakistan on March 23, 1962, Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan, President of Pakistan, said, "Whilst promoting our own ideology, we must not be unmindful of our obligation to the protection, progress and welfare of the minorities in our midst. The Constitution fully ensures their rights and we must honour those rights in letter as well as in spirit".

Educational Advancement

In the educational field, Hindus receive all facilities that are given to Muslim students. No distinction is made on the basis of religion, caste or creed. Apart from the general and technical education, which is imparted to Hindu students along with Muslim students, they receive special education at institutions specifically founded for them.

Known as *Tols* these institutions impart Sanskrit education upto to the degree standard. Sanskrit education consists of three stages, namely *Adya* (Primary), *Madhya* (Intermediate) and *Upadhi* (Degree). The curricula of the *Tols* include *Veyakaran* (Grammar), *Kabya* (Poetry and Drama), *Purana* (Mythology), *Smriti* (Tradition), *Veda* (Scripture), *Vedanta* (Philosophy of the Veda), *Sankhya* (Sankhya philosophy), and *Ayurveda* (Medicine). The Degree examinations are conducted by the East Pakistan Sanskrit and Pali Education Board, which is a Government body. Diplomas are conferred on the successful candidates every year. The number of *Tols* exceeds 100 in the Pro-

vince. Sixty per cent of *Tols* are aided by the Government. About Rs. 1,000,000 are spent annually by the Government for the advancement of education among Hindus. Of the important *Tols* and educational Institutions, the names of Sanskrit College (Sylhet), Sanskrit College (Comilla), Bakai Sanskrit College (Barisal), Dharmasova (Dinajpur), and Dharmasova (Mymensingh) are worth mentioning. There are over 140 Sanskrit and Pali *Tols* in East Pakistan. The Scheduled Castes are given special facilities in the field of education, and there is a separate Government Department which looks after the advancement of education amongst the Scheduled Caste Hindus.

Besides the Government-sponsored body, there is also the non-government organisation—the East Pakistan Saraswat Samaj—which imparts Sanskrit and Pali education. The Provincial Governor presides over the annual convocation of the Samaj.

The age-old Ayurveda system of medicine evolved by the Hindu saints is still popular with many sections of the people in East Pakistan. Ayurvedic pharmacies are to be found in every nook and corner of the Province. Production of Ayurvedic medicines is an important industry in East Pakistan and is entirely owned and run by Hindus. Almost all the Ayurvedic physicians are Hindus.

Socio-Cultural Organisations

The Hindus enjoy complete cultural freedom. There are a large number of cultural organisations, foremost among them is Varendra Research Society which has done valuable research work on Bengal's literature, history, art and architecture.

The Society founded in 1910, at the instance of Kumar Sarat Kumar Roy of Dighapatia, Rajshahi district, was assisted by eminent

scholars like Akshay Kumar Mitra, C.I.E. and Rai Bahadur Rama Prasad Chanda. It has a magnificent Museum at Rajshahi, where valuable specimens of art, sculpture, coins and rare manuscripts have been collected and preserved. The Museum is one of the best of its kind in the sub-continent. It is now under the supervision of the Department of Archaeology, Government of Pakistan.

The Baldha Garden and the attached Museum at Dacca bequeathed to the people of Dacca by the late Mr. Narendra Narain Roy Choudhury have been preserved and maintained at Government expense since Independence. The Garden is situated on the south-eastern fringe of the town in Wari area and the total area covered by it is about 6-1/2 acres. The Garden is specially rich in varieties of cactus, orchids and water-lilies. The cactus varieties run into several hundred and the orchids are said to be among the best in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent.

An important socio-cultural organization of the Hindus is the Rama Krishna Mission which brings together the monastic devotees and lay followers of Sri Rama Krishna, a Hindu saint of the 19th century, who is said to have been blessed with the vision of Goddess Kali in person. The chief object of the Mission is to impart and promote the study of the Vedanta and its principles as propounded by Sri Rama Krishna and practised in his own life, and also to encourage the study of comparative theology. East Pakistan has about a dozen centres of the Mission, with their headquarters at Dacca and International Headquarters at Belur in West Bengal (India). At most of the centres, regular classes and lectures are arranged on Vedanta, the life and teachings of Sri Rama Krishna and the works of Swami Vivekananda, the most illustrious disciple of the saint and the founder

of the Mission. The Mission also carries out humanitarian work and runs a number of schools. Of late, it has also started publishing books on philosophy, theology and kindred subjects.

Mention may also be made of the East Pakistan Brahmo Samaj, which has a big congregational hall and a well-equipped library in Dacca. The Brahmos are followers of Brahmo-Dharma, which is claimed to be a synthesis of Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. It was preached in Bengal by the illustrious Raja Ram Mohan Roy in the early nineteenth century.

The Probartak Sangha of Chittagong is another socio-cultural organisation having activities in almost all spheres of life except politics. The Probartak Sangha shelters destitutes—orphans, Hindu widows and girls—who are taught different crafts to make them learn lucrative trades.

Monuments and Temples

There are numerous Hindu and Buddhist temples and historical monuments scattered throughout East Pakistan. Hindu and Buddhist Kings ruled over the land till the advent of the Muslims in the late twelfth century. A few Hindu feudal lords continued to rule some regions even upto the time of Emperor Akbar. Many of them erected temples and monuments out of strong religious fervour or to commemorate important events. These temples and monuments had in many cases decayed and some of them were buried in course of time, to be discovered later by archaeologists.

Historically, these monuments may be classified under two categories, namely, those of the pre-Muslim period and those of the Muslim period. The pre-Muslim art and architecture of East Pakistan is best represented in the excavated historical monu-

ments at Mahasthan and Paharpur. Mahasthan has been identified with Pundranagar, the earliest known capital of Bengal, and Paharpur was a great monastery and centre of learning during Buddhist rule.

The remains of the ruined city of Mahasthan, originally called Pundranagar, lie seven miles north of the modern town of Bogra. According to historians, it was a provincial capital as early as the Mauryan period, about the third century B.C. It was fortified most probably by the Pala Kings, with brick defensive walls, 11 feet thick, forming a fort some 5,000 feet long and 4,000 feet broad and rising today to a height of 15 feet. Excavations carried out in the surrounding areas by archaeologists have brought to light important monuments belonging to the Hindu and Buddhist faiths. The walls of the temples still bear fine specimens of decorated bricks and terra-cotta images of gods, goddesses and animals and also floral designs.

Paharpur, a village in Rajshahi district, is the site of the remains of what is considered to have been the greatest Buddhist monastery in the sub-continent. It is presumed to have been constructed about 800 A.D., during the reign of the Pala Dynasty. The remains of the monastery consist of a vast square court, about 920 feet on each side, surrounded by an enclosing peristyle comprising 177 cells, each about 13 feet long.

A special feature of the temple is the sculptured stone and terra-cotta panels on its walls. The terra-cotta panels are more remarkable than the stone ones. Their subjects include Buddha, gods and goddesses, animal-fables, men and women of various professions and natural objects. They are crude in execution and have no academic tradition behind them. Nevertheless, they are refreshing objects in

contrast with the conventionalised art of the Gupta period.

Mahasthan and Paharpur offer some of the best specimens of the art and architecture of the pre-Muslim period. Hindu art and architecture did not decline, but flourished with new vigour in East Bengal during the Muslim period, and are best represented to this day in the monuments and temples at Khulna, Faridpur, Rajshahi, Pabna and Dinajpur districts. Though largely following traditional style, they nevertheless show the influence of Muslim architecture and exemplify the capacity of their builders to blend new elements with the old.

One of the most pleasant structures of the Muslim period is known as Ayodhyar Math at the village of Kodala in Khulna district. From an almost illegible inscription on the Math, it appears that it was built by a Brahmin and dedicated to Taraka, which may mean Brahma. The date assigned to the monument is 16th century A.D.

The monument is constructed with the straight horizontal lines of its corniced spire intersected by the wavy vertical lines of the projections. It is built of fine-chiselled red bricks and the exterior face is polygonal in plan with five recesses on either side of the central face. The brick ornamentation is of a singularly high order, with some delicate floral designs in moulded brickwork.

The temple of Gopinath Deva, situated in a village not far off from Paharpur in Rajshahi district, has a traditional form of architecture. It has a sloped curvilinear roof truncated at the top, evidently borrowed from 'leaf-huts', very common in East and West Bengal. The temple is said to have been constructed about four hundred years ago by a devotee of Gopinath Deva. It is about 50 feet in height. Tradition has it that a Muslim Sultan granted rent-free *jagir* (landed property)

for its maintenance.

The temple of Kantanagar, situated about 17 miles north of Dinajpur town, has been described by a European as one of the finest temples of Bengal. It has been dated 1708-22 and is said to have been built by Raja Prananath, a Hindu landlord of Dinajpur. The terra-cotta panels of the temple illustrate a typical form of Hindu architecture and depict stories from the two epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. It is designed in the form of wooden *raths* or chariots arranged in tiers of bent cornices, mounted at corners with miniature curvilinear towers.

The temple at Mathurapur in Faridpur district bears similarities with the Kodala Math of Khulna district, but is twelve-sided on plan with a diameter of 12-1/2 feet at the base. Its doorways show influence of Muslim architectural designs. The convex spire survives to a height of 70 feet. Its whole exterior face is decorated with brick mouldings projecting horizontally, between which are carved scenes from rural life and the epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*.

Jayannath temple is situated in the village of Handlal in Chalmohar Thana of Pabna district. From an inscription, the temple appears to have been repaired about 1590 A.D. It is square on plan with a pyramidal spire topped by a finial. The doorway has a two-centred semi-circular arch of Muslim style with animal and floral patterns on the spandrels framework panelled with rosettes and human figures.

Mainamati; a citadel of ancient Buddhist culture dating as far back as the 10th century A.D., was discovered accidentally by the military, while setting up an advance camp in Comilla during the Second World War. In 1955, excavations were started on a planned basis. As a result of the recent diggings, the central shrine of the

monastery has been almost completely cleared and significant discoveries have been made regarding the history and chronology of the site. The most important is the discovery of two definite building levels below the cruciform shrine which goes to prove that the place remained under Buddhist occupation for a considerably long time. The excavations in the cells, besides establishing many building and occupation periods, have yielded a rich harvest of objects comprising two dozen bronze images of Buddha, Bodhisattva, goddess Tara, Pattikera-type silver coins, terra-cotta sealings and a variety of pottery specimens. The most important among the finds is an inscribed copper plate measuring $10\frac{1}{2}$ " x $16\frac{1}{2}$ " with an emblem showing a seated bull.

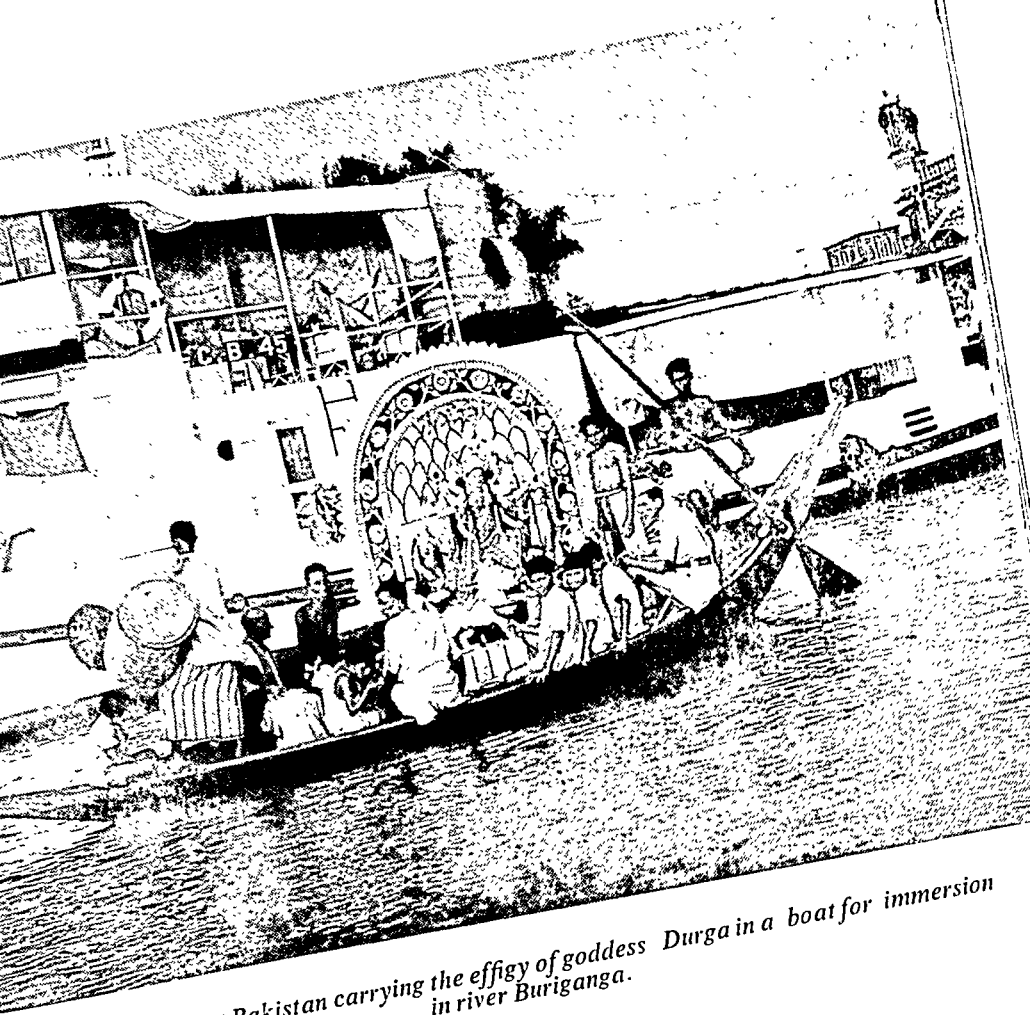
The excavations at Malnamati though not yet complete, have brought to light valuable archaeological and chronological evidence for the reconstruction of the history of ancient Bengal.

Festivals

Hindus observe their religious festivals with complete freedom everywhere in East Pakistan. Government zealously guard their freedom in these activities and see to it that there is no interference with their religious and cultural observances. Several new temples have been constructed in East Pakistan since Partition. Specially notable is the beautiful Dhakeswari Cotton Mills Temple, recently built at Narayanganj.

There are numerous religious sects amongst the Hindus who observe a number of festivals. The main festivals are: Durga Puja, Lakshmi Puja, Kali Puja or Dewali, Sarswati Puja, Dol-Yatra or Holi and Rathayatra.

Among these, Durga Puja or Dussera is the most important



Hindus of East Pakistan carrying the effigy of goddess Durga in a boat for immersion in river Buriganga.



Palace Hotel, Karachi, owned by a Hindu businessman.

festival of the Hindus. Durga is imagined as the mother of the world, whose worship was introduced by the mythological king Suratha as a spring festival. Both in East and West Bengal, the festival is celebrated during autumn in *Aswin* (September-October), the sixth month of the Bengali year. Historically speaking, Durga Puja, as an autumn festival, was introduced in Bengal about four hundred years ago by Kansa Narayan, a feudal lord of Rajshahi district.

Since then, Durga Puja has become the biggest festival of the Hindus. It is observed for several days till the tenth day of the new moon in the month of *Aswin*. The image of the goddess is erected in every Hindu locality, big or small, throughout East Pakistan and is visited by every Hindu. Durga is shown as having ten arms, holding ten types of weapons and is depicted as striking the death-blow at the vanquished Mahishasura, or the Buffalo-Demon.

The Puja has an additional human significance for the Hindus. Durga is Uma or Gauri, daughter of the Himalaya and wife of Shiva. Once in a year, she pays a visit to her father's house, where she brings joy, happiness and festivity with her. But her term of visit is only three days, the seventh, eighth, and ninth, after the new moon. The legend bears resemblance to what ordinarily happens in every Hindu household when the married daughter, after a short visit to her parents, takes leave of them. As such, the Puja has an extremely emotional appeal to the Hindus.

Hindus wear new clothes and exchange visits during the Puja days. The ceremony is terminated on the tenth day of the new moon after immersion of the image of the goddess in rivers or tanks.

Durga Puja is followed by Lakshmi Puja on the day of the next full-moon. Lakshmi is the goddess of wealth and prosperity, and is

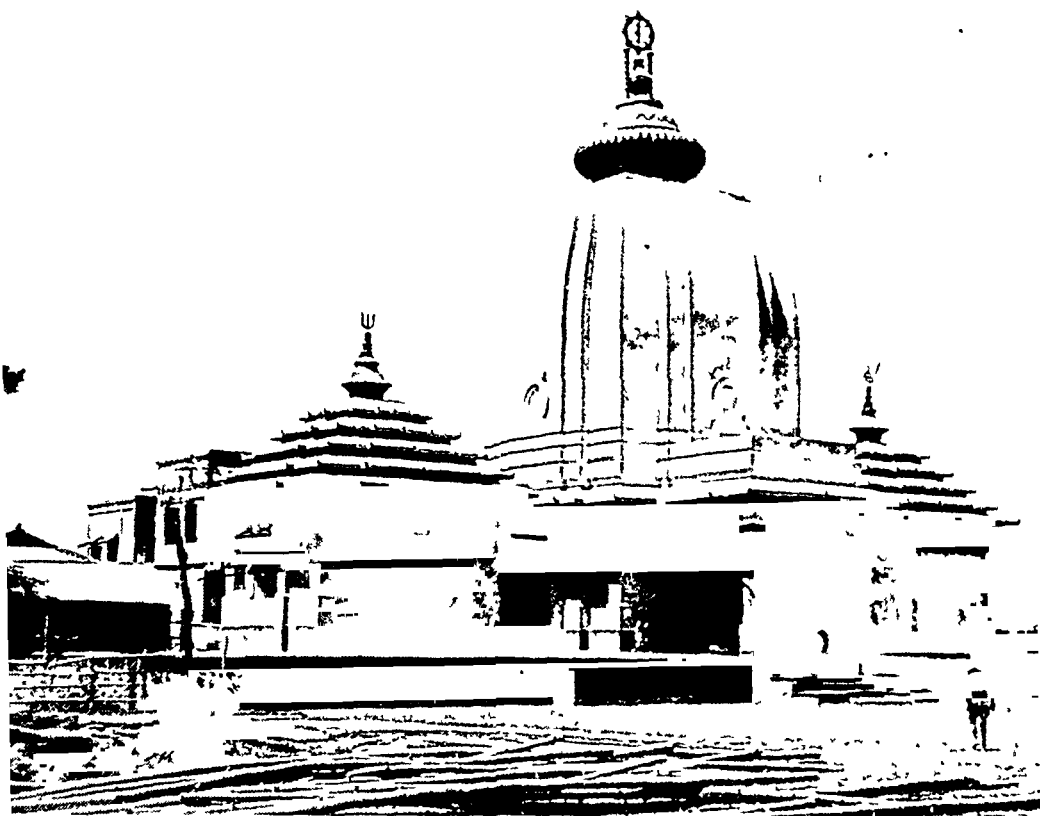
worshipped in every Hindu household.

Kali Puja or Dewali is observed on the night preceding the next new moon after the Durga Puja and the Lakshmi Puja. Bengali Hindus consider the goddess Kali as the embodiment of the *Adya Sakti* or primordial power, who revealed herself on that night. She is one of the four-fold manifestations of the Supreme Godhead. Her genesis is *Krodha* or anger; this anger was roused when *asuras* or the forces of evil attacked Ambala or Durga, from whose crest she issued forth and annihilated the *asuras*. Her distorted face and dark complexion is symbolic of that anger.

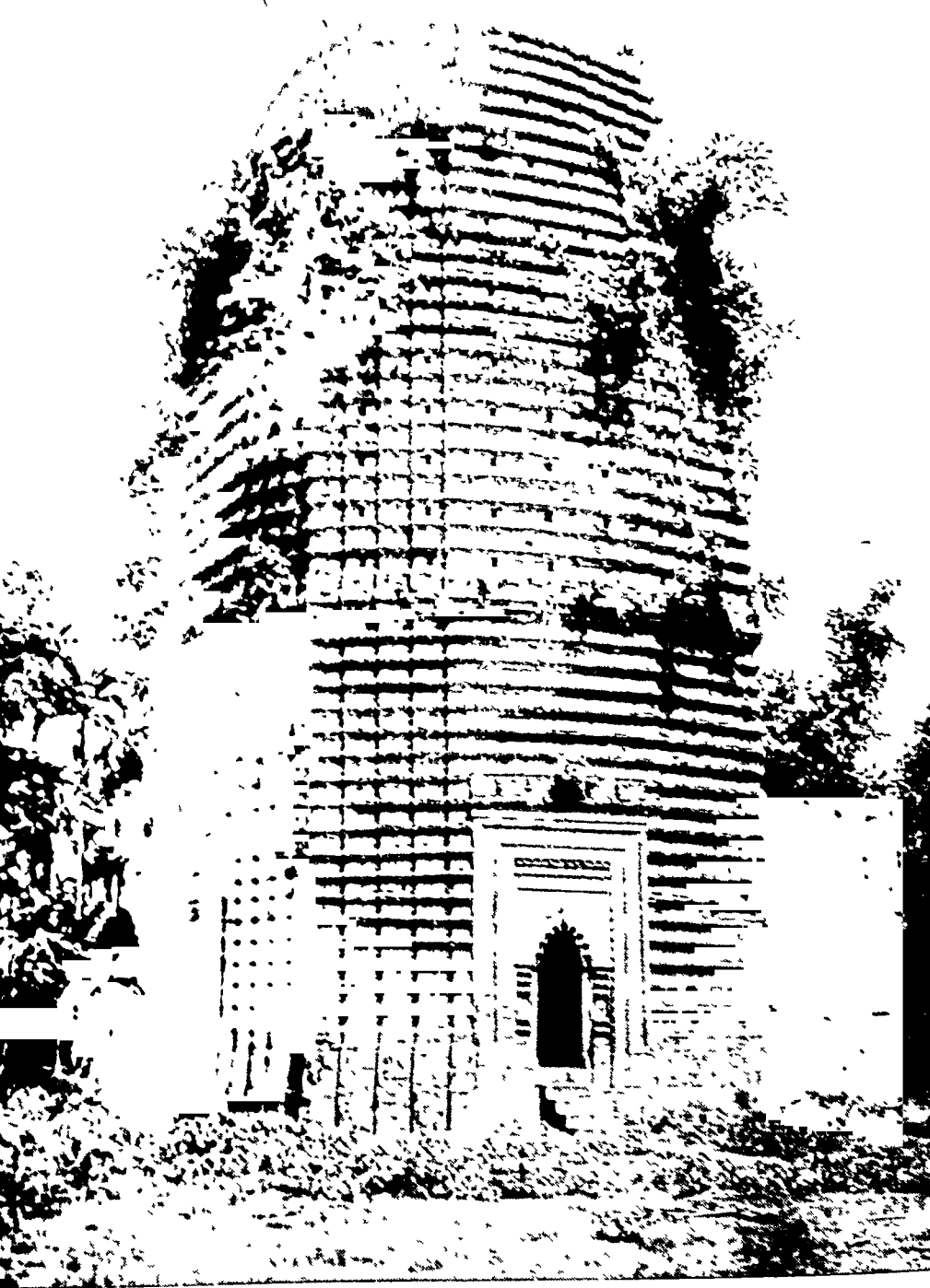
The goddess is represented as dancing an ecstatic dance over the body of Shiva, who lies prostrate at her feet. The idea behind the representation is this: She is the Prime Mover and *Prakriti* (Nature), and Shiva is the *Purusha* (Supreme Male); creation stems forth from both of them but it is she who expresses her over-powering joy of creation in an ecstatic dance.

Unlike the Hindus of the other regions of the sub-continent, the Hindus of East and West Bengal conceive the goddess mainly in her beneficial aspects. A universal feature of Kali Puja is the illumination of every Hindu household and establishment at night. Men go down to the river or to nearby tanks in the evening and hold up lighted torches in remembrance of the departed.

Saraswati Puja, falling on the seventh of the new moon in *Magh* (January-February), the tenth month of the Bengali year, is mainly the festival of Hindu students. Saraswati is the goddess of Learning, who is believed to bestow knowledge and learning on her worshippers. The image of Saraswati is erected at the premises of almost all the educational institutions of East Pakistan having a substantial



Kali Mandir at Dhakeshwari Cotton Mills, Narayanganj, East Pakistan.



View of Dail at Mathurapur, district Faridpur, East Pakistan.

number of Hindu students.

Holi or Dol-Yatra is another important festival of the Hindus. It is pre-eminently a festival of those who are devotees of Vishnu, whether known as Narayan or Krishna. Well-to-do people have generally a separate pavilion specially built for the occasion, while others erect temporary canopies for the purpose. Early in the morning of the appointed day—the full-moon day of *Phalgun* (February-March)—the eleventh month of the Bengali year—the deity seated on throne is brought to the pavilion and placed there with his face to the south. He is anointed and bathed, and after the usual worship and offerings of flowers, he is smeared with coloured powder. The throne is suspended by means of cords and rocked seven times. Hence the name *Dol* or swing—*Dol-Yatra* literally means "swing festival". The festival is also known as Spring Festival and marks the end of winter and the advent of spring. Hindu men and women—especially the young folk—traditionally throw coloured powder and sprinkle coloured water on one another.

Ratha-Yatra or Chariot Festival is observed in *Asharh* (June-July), the third month of the Bengali year. On this occasion, the Chariot of Jagannath or the Lord of the World, is erected in all the important Hindu localities. The festival is observed throughout East Pakistan. The most famous centres of this festival are Dhamrai, a village in the Dacca district, and Comilla, the headquarters of Tippera district. Big fairs are held and huge processions are taken out at these places on the occasion.

There are numerous sacred places in East Pakistan where a large number of devout Hindus assemble every year at certain auspicious dates for spiritual upliftment. One such sacred place is Chandranath,

which is one of the most famous centres of pilgrimage not only of East Pakistan, but of the whole sub-continent.

According to the Hindu tradition, Chandranath, a small hill about 23 miles to the north of Chittagong town, was the abode of Lord Shiva during *Kaliyuga*, the last of the four mythological divisions of time. The pilgrimage is said to have been introduced by Vyasa, a great Hindu saint, who enjoyed the favour of Lord Shiva and, at the instance of the latter, installed images of 35 million gods and goddesses at Chandranath. In fact, two or three dozen images of gods and goddesses are installed in the different temples at Chandranath. The most famous object of the pilgrimage is Sitakunda, a fountain-head from which occasionally warm water gushes out. Sitakunda is said to have been created by saint Bhargava to provide a bathing place for Sita, wife of Ramchandra, the hero of the epic *Ramayana*, when they came here during their sojourn in the forests.

A great fair is held at Chandranath every year on the occasion of Shiva-Ratri, when hundreds and thousands of devout Hindus assemble there from distant corners of East Pakistan and even from India. Chandranath is also a sacred place for the Buddhists who hold a fair there on *Chaitra Sankranti*, the last day of the Bengali year. It is said that a finger bone of Lord Buddha is buried on the top of the hill.

Next to Chandranath, the most famous centre of pilgrimage in East Pakistan is Langalbandh, situated four miles from Narayanganj. According to Hindu mythology, it was made a place of pilgrimage by Parasuram, who murdered his mother at the behest of his father and expiated for the sin by bathing at the sacred Brahmakunda. He is said to have brought down to Langalbandh, the water of

the Brahmakunda, for the benefit of the people, by furrowing the earth with his reputed axe with which he killed his mother. The river Brahmaputra is said to be running along this furrow. During the last month of the Bengali year, a huge three-day fair is held when devout people from far and near assemble to take the sacred bath in the waters of the river. There are also a number of temples of gods and goddesses here.

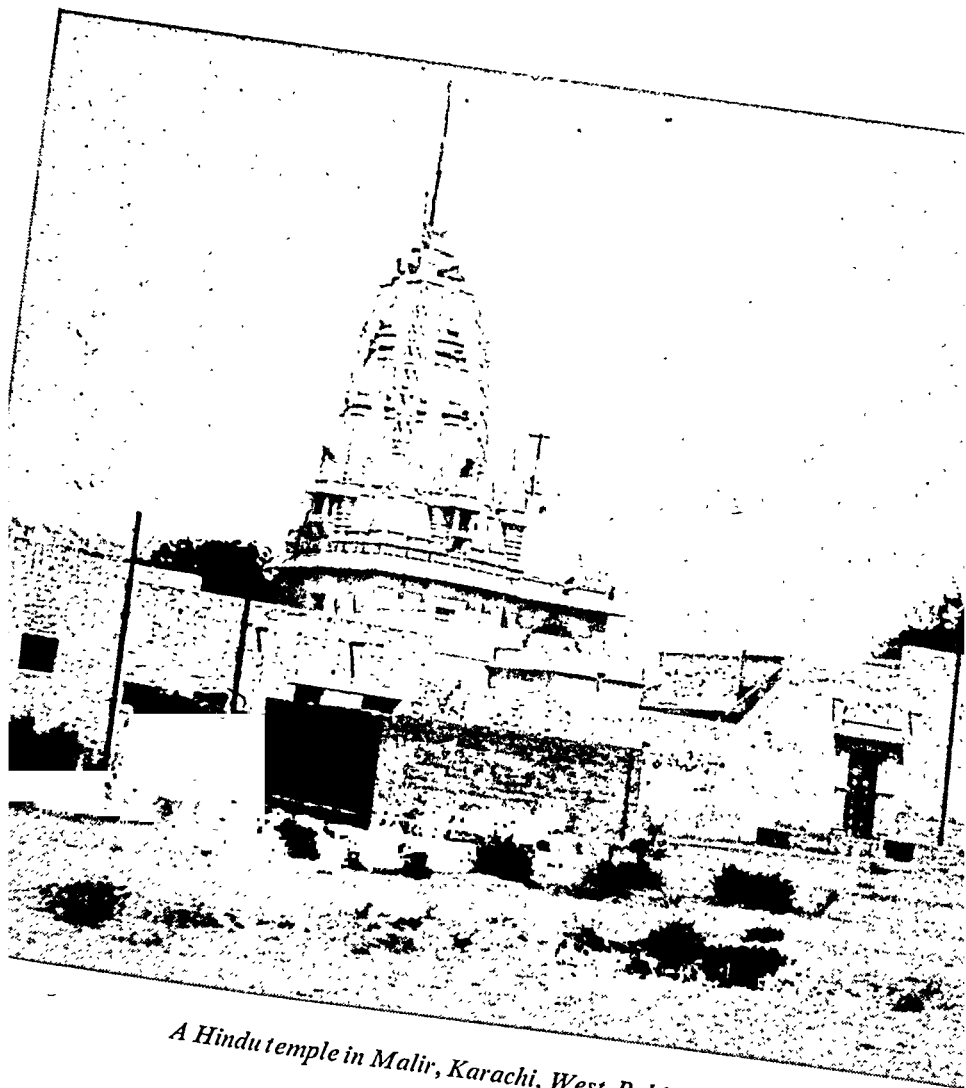
Khetur, birthplace of the great Vaishnav saint Narottama Thakur (15th-16th Century), is a famous centre of pilgrimage of the Bengali Vaishnavs, namely, the followers of Sri Chaitanya. Narottama established here six statues of Chaitanya and other Vaishnavs. Vaishnavs still assemble here for pilgrimage every year and a big three-day fair is held at the place on that occasion.

Adinath in Chittagong district is also an important place of pilgrimage for the Hindus. The pilgrims visiting Chandranath also visit Adinath, where the image of Adinath Mahadeva and Durga are installed. Adinath is said to have been installed by the widow of a local landlord. An eight-day fair is held here every year. There are also some beautiful Buddhist temples here.

Govinda Dwio on the Karatoa river at Mahasthangarh in Bogra district is also an important sacred place for the Hindus. Karatoa is regarded as a sacred river only next to the Ganges. It is believed to have been created from the sacred water which poured forth from the hands of Shiva at the time of his marriage to Gauri, the daughter of the Himalaya. This is the reason, it is said, why the river is called Karatoa, which means "Water of the Hand". Bathing at Govinda Dwio on the last day of *Pous* (December-January), the ninth month of the Bengali year, is a great occasion for the Hindus. The ceremony

becomes more auspicious at *Narayani-Yoga* which generally falls every twelve years, when hundreds of thousands of Hindu men and women assemble here from even outside East Pakistan to have a dip at Karatoa.

S. K. Gupta.



A Hindu temple in Malir, Karachi, West Pakistan.



St. Patrick's Cathedral, Karachi, West Pakistan.

CHRISTIANS IN PAKISTAN

The advent of Christians in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent is practically as old as the Christian era. St. Thomas the Apostle came to this country in the first century A. D. After a short sojourn at Taxila and the conversion of the Scythian King Gondopharnes, the saint moved down south into the Deccan where he was martyred at Mylapore in Madras. The existence of the Syrian Church in the South further confirms the antiquity of Christianity in the country.

The next we hear of Christianity in the country is the period of Muslim rule in Indo-Pakistan sub-continent. It was the Portuguese who brought the Christian faith to the sub-continent in the late 15th and early 16th centuries. The great Christian preacher St. Francis Xavier spread the Christian religion in Indo-Pakistan sub-continent, Ceylon and the Far East. Akbar the Great Moghal and a model of tolerance, invited three Missions of Jesuits priests from Goa. The *Ibadat Khana* (house of worship) at Fatehpur Sikri became the centre of inter-religious discussion. Jehangir, son of Akbar, faithfully pursued the policy

of tolerance laid down by his great father. Fathers Monserrate and Jerome Xavier, nephew of St. Francis Xavier, have left a very vivid account of the age. Jehangir permitted the Christian Fathers to build churches for their congregations at Agra and Lahore. The rights of profession and propagation of the faith were secured.

With the arrival of the British in the country and their gradual switch over from commercial pursuits to political enterprise, Christian missionaries of various denominations found their way into the country. In the latter half of the 19th century, American Missionaries also came to revive the faith of St. Thomas the Apostle.

In Pakistan today, there are nearly 800,000 Christians of all denominations. These Christians have lived here for generations and have after Partition chose to stay in Pakistan—their original home. Quite a few Christians came over to Pakistan from India at their own option after Independence. The late Christian leader, Mr. C. E. Gibbon came over to Pakistan from India and became the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly.

It will not be out of place to mention that Christianity in East Pakistan is nearly four hundred years old; It can be traced back to about a hundred and fifty years in West Pakistan though beginnings were made in Lahore during the reign of the Mughal Emperor Jehangir (1605 to 1627 A. D.). The Christian population in both the Wings of Pakistan is predominantly of the agricultural class residing in rural areas but quite a large number of Christians live in cities and towns where gradually an upper middle class is springing up.

State Service

The normal occupations of Christians in urban areas are state and commercial service, teaching, medicine and nursing, and a very

small proportion has entered business. Some Pakistani Christians hold high positions in the Government. To mention but a few: Mr. A. R. Cornelius is the Chief Justice of Pakistan's Supreme Court, Mr. Justice H. T. Raymond is a Judge of the West Pakistan High Court, Air Commodore B. K. Dass is the Director General of Civil Aviation, Mr. L. Cordelro is the Deputy Inspector General of Prisons, Mr. Percy Pinto is Deputy Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, Government of Pakistan, Mr. A. Braganza is the Deputy Director of Passports and Immigration, and Mr. Stephen Menezes is Deputy Director, Trade Marks, Government of Pakistan. There are two important retired Christians, viz., Mr. S. M. Burke, ex-Ambassador of Pakistan to Canada, Scandinavian countries and Thailand, and Mr. C. M. Lobo, ex-Chief Judge of the Sind High Court who went as a member of the Pakistan Delegation to the U. N. O. There are also a number of Christian officers holding high positions in the Pakistan Defence Forces.

In the big cities, many Christians have high executive posts in private firms and commercial concerns. There are well known Christian doctors, lawyers and educationists in Pakistan. Dr. A. P. R. Pinto is a prominent Surgeon of Karachi and Rev. Fr. Stephen Raymond, Principal of St. Patrick's College, St. Patrick's Higher and Lower Secondary School, and St. Patrick's Teachers' Training College, Karachi, is a well known educationist and has served on the Curriculum Committee of the National Education Commission. Dr. Drago of Mirpurkhas has been acclaimed as one of the most popular and social-spirited doctors of Sind.

There are a number of Christians working in the Department of Law and Order and in the Police. There are a few Superintendents,

several Deputy Superintendents and Inspectors, Sub-Inspectors and constables in the Police Department. To sum up, Christians have a free choice of joining any department of Government or civil life; there is no official bar against them, and for this matter, against any of the minority communities in Pakistan.

In spite of the fact that the Christians are a minority community, there is a vast field open for the talents in the country. The Government does not discriminate between citizens; as a matter of fact some Christians hold responsible jobs in business organizations owned and manned by Muslims. The Christian community has not seriously endeavoured to enter business life. The youth of the community still give preference to white collar jobs in firms or in offices. The Government, through the Public Service Commission, holds competitive examinations for selection of candidates and there is no such thing as a communal allotment.

National Outlook

Socially speaking, Christian society in Pakistan can be divided into two major groups: the westernised section and the non-westernised section. The westernised section consists of Anglo-Pakistanis, Goans and East Indians while the other comprises Punjabis, Bengalis, Madrasis, Gujaratis etc. The westernised group is found in the large cities and towns, and the non-westernised group is spread all over the country. Except for the fact of common worship, there is an evident gulf between the two groups in the Church, but this is narrowing down gradually. National culture and national pride is converting the westernised section of the community and they are slowly adapting themselves to changed conditions. The indigenous Christian population in West and East Pakistan is completely Pakistani,

socially, culturally and linguistically.

The Christians, particularly in West Pakistan, have Muslim and Hindu type names which make them unidentifiable from other citizens. A visitor to villages in East or West Pakistan would find it difficult to distinguish between a Christian and a Muslim because of the common way of life, dress, language and customs.

Cordial Relations

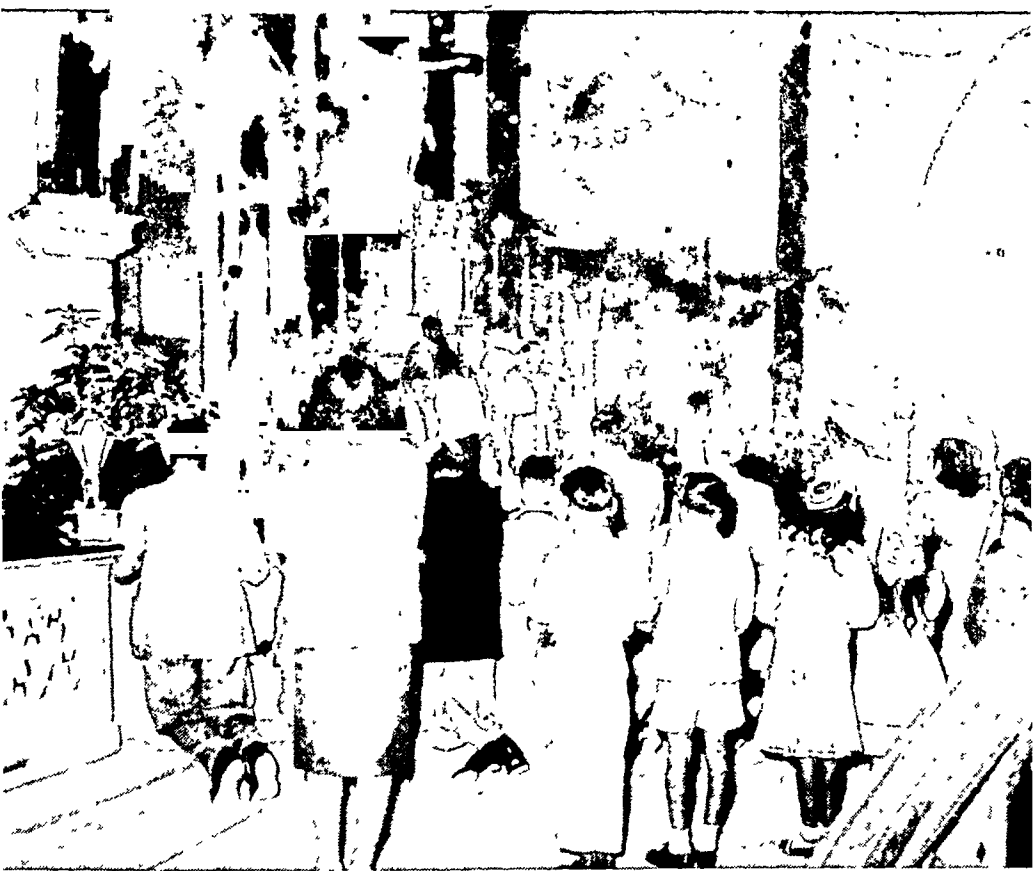
It is only in the big cities that Christians are distinctly recognised particularly by the dress of their womenfolk who wear mostly European dress. The social relations between Christians and Muslims in Pakistan are very cordial. There have been no untoward incidents or communal clashes between Christians and Muslims. The Quaid-i-Azam has left a moral legacy to the Muslims according to which they consider the minorities in the country a "sacred trust". The Muslim leaders of Pakistan have time and again emphasised in the clearest terms their intention to preserve the life and property of the minorities and to accord them the same rights as the majority community.

Religiously speaking, the Christian faith has much in common with Islam. The Muslims call the Christians *Ahl-i-Kitab* (People of the Book) and have great regard for Lord Jesus Christ and the Blessed Mother Mary. No Muslim ever mentions the name of Jesus or Mary without a concluding phrase of reverence; while a Christian would say "*Masih*," the Muslim would say *Hazrat Masih* or *Isa "Alai-as-Salam"* (salutation be to him). In the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Christians, according to the Constitution, have the Fundamental Right "to profess, practise and propagate their religion and to run their own educational religious and social institutions".

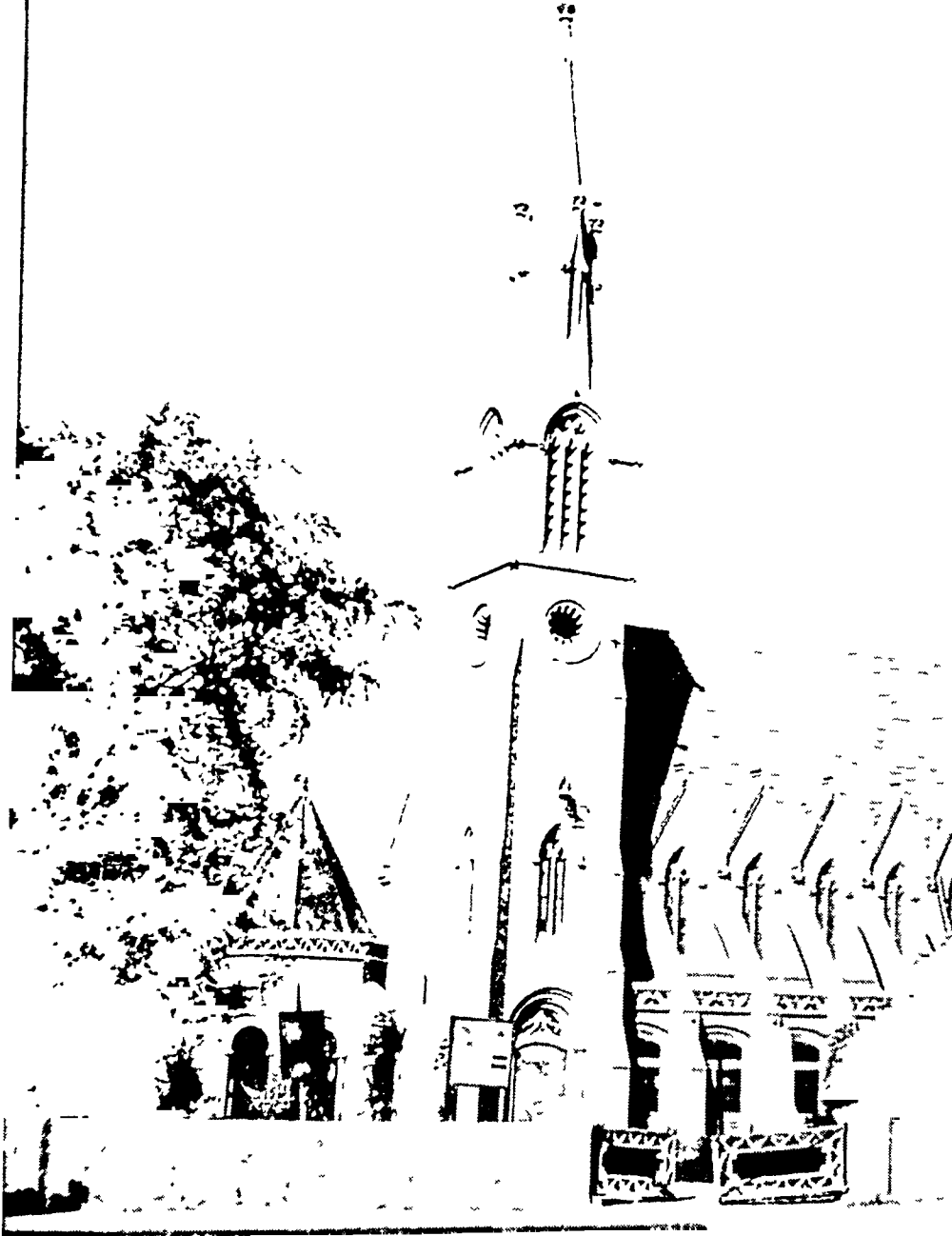
Institutions

The Christian organizations of both the Church and the Laity run numerous schools, colleges, hospitals, dispensaries, social centres and welfare programmes in the country. Several Christian institutions, particularly schools, have celebrated their centenaries. In Karachi alone, four schools, *viz.*, St. Patrick's High School, St. Joseph's Convent Girls' School, C. M. S. High School, and Grammar School have had their centenaries. Christian teachers are so sincerely dedicated to the cause of education that there are eleven Silver Jubilarians in St. Patrick's High School alone, and many more are waiting to reach this distinction. These schools are patronised by the Muslims from all walk of life. The names of Christian Colleges, such as Foreman Christian College, Lahore; Murray College, Sialkot; Gordon College, Rawalpindi; Edward's College, Peshawar; St. Patrick's College, Karachi; Notre Dame College, Dacca, and St. Joseph's College for Women, Karachi, are quite familiar to every educated person in Pakistan. There are Christian hospitals in practically every large city and small dispensaries and clinics in villages. Some of the big Christian hospitals are the Holy Family Hospitals at Rawalpindi, Karachi and Dacca; Seventh Day Adventist Hospital, Karachi; United Christian Hospital, Lahore; and C. M. S. Hospital Peshawar and Quetta. Some of these hospitals run nursing schools. It is not possible to mention the many other Christian institutions in the limited space of this small article.

Undoubtedly there has been in recent years unfriendly criticism against Christian missionaries and institutions by certain sections of the Muslim community. There was a demand for the nationalisation of educational institutions, but the Government spokesman told the National Assembly on July 19, 1963 that they had no intention in the



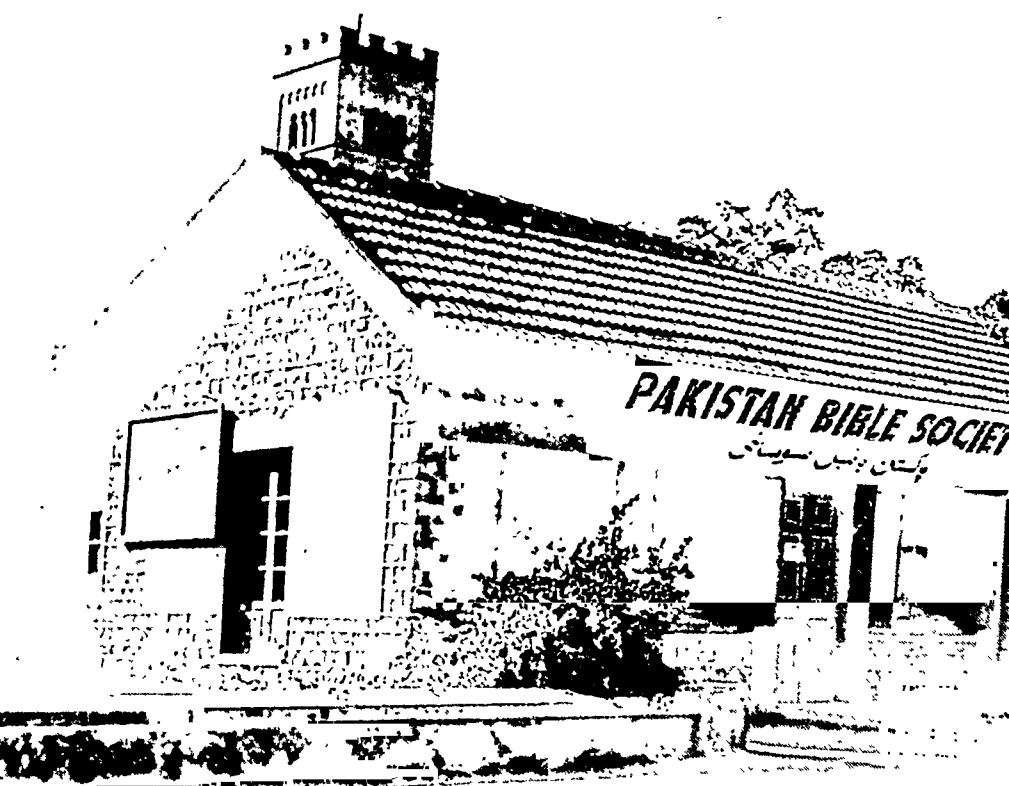
Christians attending congregation prayers in a Church in Karachi, West Pakistan.



St. Andrew's Church of Scotland, Saddar, Karachi.



The 70-year old Church building at Shimolia, East Pakistan.



The office of the Pakistan Bible Society in Karachi, West Pakistan.

near future of nationalising Christian educational institutions. There was also a persistent demand for the repatriation of foreign missionaries, but the Foreign Minister, Mr. Z. A. Bhutto, dealt with the issue in the Parliament in a most logical and rational manner and explained the international repercussions of such an action.

Two of the great scholars of Pakistan, Dr. I. H. Qureshi, Vice-Chancellor of Karachi University, and Mr. Mumtaz Hasan addressed the Christians of Karachi during 1963 and both of them laid emphatic stress on the necessity of developing better understanding between Christians and Muslims, not only in Pakistan but all over the world. Recently Dr. Runciman, the famous British historian, expressed the same sentiments of better understanding between the two great religions of the world. It is surely a crying need of the age that these two great faiths of the world should understand each other. I need not repeat the assurances of the Quaid-i-Azam, Liaquat Ali Khan and President Mohammed Ayub Khan and other leaders given to the minorities from time to time. Undoubtedly, by repetition the statements can lose their significance and value, but on the other hand, they also display extreme sincerity as in this case. Even though we may under-rate the utterances of our mortal leaders, yet we can in no case ignore assurances and securities provided by the more or less permanent custodian of the rights of citizens—the Constitution.

Political Life

The late Mr. C. E. Gibbon was Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly; the late Mr. B. L. Rallia Ram was an M. C. A. and so was Mr. Peter Paul Gomes from East Pakistan who was appointed a Minister in the last Cabinet before Martial Law. The late D. B. S. P. Singha served on the Minority Advisory Committee of the Constituent

Assembly of Pakistan. Mr. Joshua Fazal Din was a Deputy Minister in the late Dr. Khan's Cabinet of West Pakistan.

Christians have shown great interest in the national and international affairs of their country. They are a loyal and peace-loving community and are contributing their share in every aspect of national life. Their chief fields of service are education, medical assistance and social welfare. At the time of Independence in 1947, they rendered yeoman service at the refugee centres, and even in January 1964, according to the statement of H. E. Mr. Abdul Monem Khan, Governor of East Pakistan, the Christians of his district served devotedly at the Muslim refugee centres. The Government and the vast majority of Muslims in Pakistan sincerely appreciate the services of the Christian institutions and organisations.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that the Christian community which has been playing the role of educators has, after Independence, also intensified higher education among its own youth. There was a time when young Christian boys after finishing their middle or high school jumped at any white collar job. Today we have Christian youth going in for higher studies in both arts and sciences. There is a fairly good number of graduates and post-graduates among Christians in Arts, Science, Commerce, Law, Engineering, Medicine and education.

Another significant achievement of the Christian community is that the English speaking group has seriously taken to Urdu, one of the two national languages. Christian English teaching schools are stressing and encouraging the study of Urdu. Lay organisations, such as the Pax Romana Graduates' Union of Pakistan, and the Catholic *Tanzim-ul-Musannafin-I-Pakistan* (Catholic Urdu Writers' Guild of

Pakistan) are working hard for the popularisation of Urdu in the community.

Games and Sports

In the field of sports, Pakistani Christians have a very proud record. Two famous cricketers, Wallis Mathias and Antao D'Souza have played for Pakistan in international Tests at home and abroad. Several ex-students of Christian institutions have earned national and international fame in sports. Christian institutions consider the field of sports as the training school for good citizenship and national pride. In national athletics competitions, two young boys Paul Alphonso and John Permal have earned great fame, and many more are coming up. Michael Rodrigues of Karachi was Pakistan's Number One in Table Tennis a few years ago and still holds an exclusively important position in the game. The Y. M. C. A. and the Y. W. C. A. in large towns of Pakistan are rendering commendable service to youth in the field of sports and culture. The membership of these organisations is predominantly non-Christian and it is always a pleasant experience to see the youth of all communities participating in recreational, cultural and intellectual activities.

Celebration of Christmas

Coming to the daily lives of Christians, it will be necessary to classify them into urban and rural groups. In the cities we find that Christians have a comparatively high standard of living, with the exception of the poorer classes who live in rural areas. The westernised Christians are a social people and like to meet each other. The Anglo-Pakistanis and Goan Christians have a great love for music and are excellent performers in instrumental and vocal music. Most of the churches in the country have splendid choirs for their sacred

music. During the season of Christmas, large towns bustle with activity. The shops display beautiful Christmas cards locally printed, and articles of decoration locally produced. Carol singers go out serenading after midnight services without any let or hindrance. At Easter time, Passion plays are organised and Easter Mondays are usually days of *Melas* (Fetes) all over the country. The "Christ King Procession" in Karachi has become an historical event and non-Christians look forward to watch thousands of Christians marching solemnly reciting prayers and singing hymns through the main streets of the city. It is one of the most important and holy occasions for Christians to display and profess their faith publicly. The Government provides all the necessary facilities for the feast. The weekly sight on Sundays, of Christians pacing fast towards their churches, full of religious piety and enthusiasm and wearing their best and cleanest dresses is clear indication of freedom of religion in the country. The poor Christians in villages and city slums are equally zealous in their religious activities. Their celebrations, though simple, are full of devotion and spiritual consciousness. Their entire life, including religion, is dominated by native civilization and the national spirit. The Church hymns are sung in Urdu, Punjabi, Gujarati, Bengali and Tamil, and the priests give sermons in local dialects. In big cities, English still persists as the language for hymns and sermons.

Denominations

Before concluding this brief survey of the Christian community in Pakistan, it is necessary to say a few words about the ecclesiastical set-up in the country. In Pakistan there are Christians of many denominations: Roman Catholics, Church of England, Presbyterians, Methodists, Seventh Day Adventists, Salvation Army, Baptists and

a few others. The clergy is mostly foreign who came to Indo-Pakistan sub-continent some time ago to spread the Gospel of Christ and to serve suffering humanity. It is very heartening that now the local clergy is coming up rapidly. In Pakistan there are three Pakistani Bishops: His Grace Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Cordeiro of Karachi, His Lordship Chandu Ray of Karachi, and His Lordship Dr. Ganguli, Auxiliary Bishop of Dacca. There are a number of native priests, nuns, ministers, pastors and deacons. It is now the policy of all church organisations to encourage national control of missionary work on account of a sort of apathy that is developing in some of the newly independent countries against foreign missionaries owing to their political and international relations. In Pakistan, the Government and the Muslims have shown praiseworthy and exemplary Islamic tolerance towards foreign clergy. They sincerely value the services rendered by foreign missionaries in the field of social and economic welfare of the citizens irrespective of their religious persuasions.

Michael M. R. Chohan.

PARSIS IN PAKISTAN

The Parsis are one of the most important minority communities of Pakistan. They are a small remnant of the once great Persian empire who have lived in this sub-continent for nearly two thousand years, losing neither their identity nor their religious beliefs. Cut off from their roots they have lived at peace among foreign peoples with different manners and customs without losing their distinct identity.

The Parsis—'Pharsi' or Persian as their name indicates—are the descendants of small bands of refugees who left their native land after the collapse of the Sassanian dynasty and the military and religious conquest of Persia by the Arabs. The earliest refugees, after a long and hazardous journey arrived at Diu, a small island in the Gulf of Cambay. Here they lived for some years, acquired a working knowledge of the language, religion and manners of the Hindus, before they set sail for Gujrat. Later, their knowledge stood them in good stead with the Rana of Sanjan who allowed them to settle in his city. For three hundred years, the Parsis lived in Sanjan without molestation.

During that time, they began to migrate, mostly as small traders, to other parts of India.

The British, on receiving the island of Bombay from Portugal as the dowry of Catherine on her marriage, to Charles II, invited some Parsis from Surat to come and settle there for the purpose of trade. Developed by the British, Bombay grew as a cosmopolitan city; the Parsis played a major part in its urbanisation, and today the majority of the community lives there—largely by trade—although the other professions, particularly medicine and law, have not been neglected. From Bombay hundreds of them migrated to Karachi.

Any city where the Parsis have settled owes to them a great part of its civic amenities. This is because the Parsis have learned the lesson of co-operative living. The smallness of the community in Pakistan (population 6,000), as elsewhere, makes unity imperative for its survival. The rich extend to the poor, opportunities for medical treatment, education and better conditions of living. Wealth is shared. This capacity for thinking and acting in terms of the society rather than of the individual, the Parsis have extended beyond the boundaries of their community. It is a basic tenet of their religion and must be an asset to any country in which they live.

Zoroastrianism

To understand the outlook of the Parsi community, their charity, their business acumen, their liberalism and at the same time, their insularity, it is necessary to look at their religion on which their manner of living is based. We must consider what there is in Zoroastrianism which has enabled it, despite the great vicissitudes it has undergone for hundreds of years, to survive so steadfastly in the hearts of its followers.

Of all the monotheistic religions, that of the Parsis is perhaps the earliest; its founder Zoroaster lived and preached about 5th—6th century B.C. Today, Parsis in Pakistan remain faithful to the tenets of this most ancient creed.

Naturally in the two thousand years that have elapsed since the founding, changes in theology and ceremonial observances have occurred. Foreign elements incorporated from civilisations amid which the Parsis have lived for so many years have crept into their ceremonies; much of the ancient customs and traditions have been superseded or allowed to lapse. Indeed, considering the vast passage of time, the wonder is that so much Zoroastrian doctrine has survived at all without being distorted—as has been the fate of other old religions—into nearly unrecognisable forms.

The reason for this is that Zoroastrianism, an essentially practical faith, has never preached extremism in any form; its adherents are not forced into conflicts between their religious beliefs and practices, because of a changing environment. Progress—whether scientific, material or cultural—is entirely consistent with the spirit of Zoroastrianism.

The Zoroastrian religion survives authoritatively in the few books which remain to us as relics of a long period of history when it was the living faith of the Persian nation. The *Avesta* i.e. the scriptures of the Parsis, is a collection of sacred writings of which the oldest and probably purest parts are the *gathas* or Divine Songs, composed by Zoroaster himself. They form also the only authentic documents of the time of the Prophet Zoroaster.

In the *gathas*, practical advice mingles with songs of praise and of communion with God. ~~Of the singer,~~ Zoroaster the prophet,



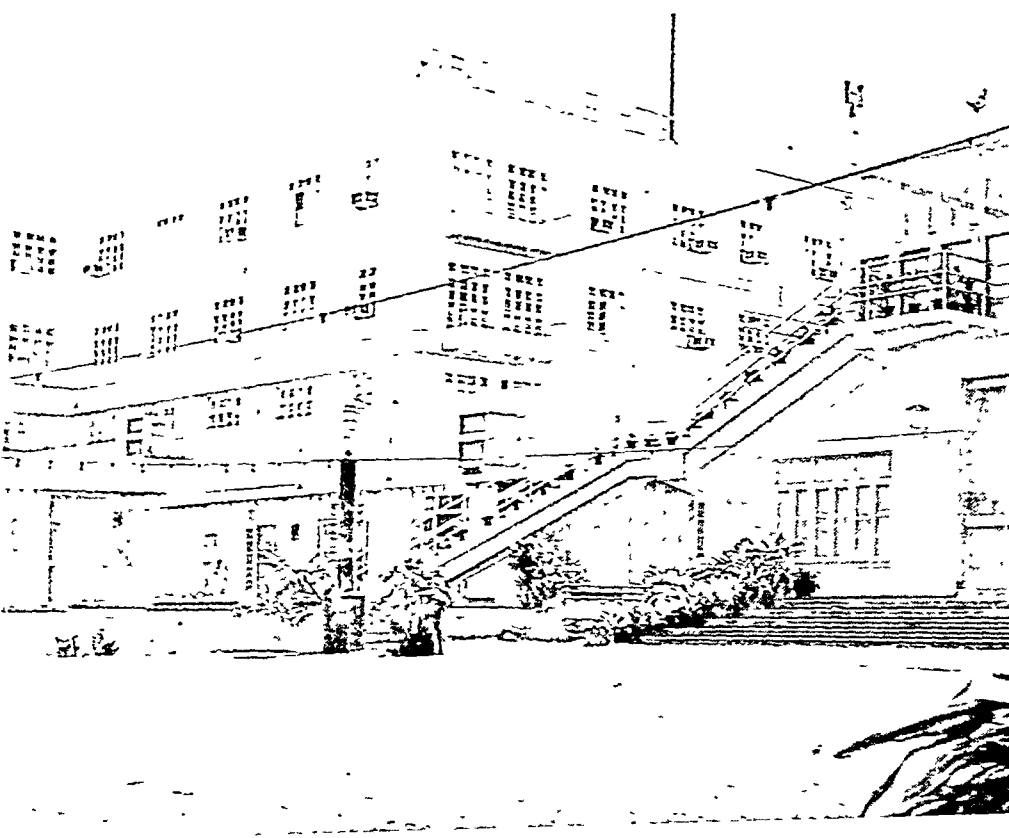
The Seventh Day Adventist Hospital, Karachi, West Pakistan.



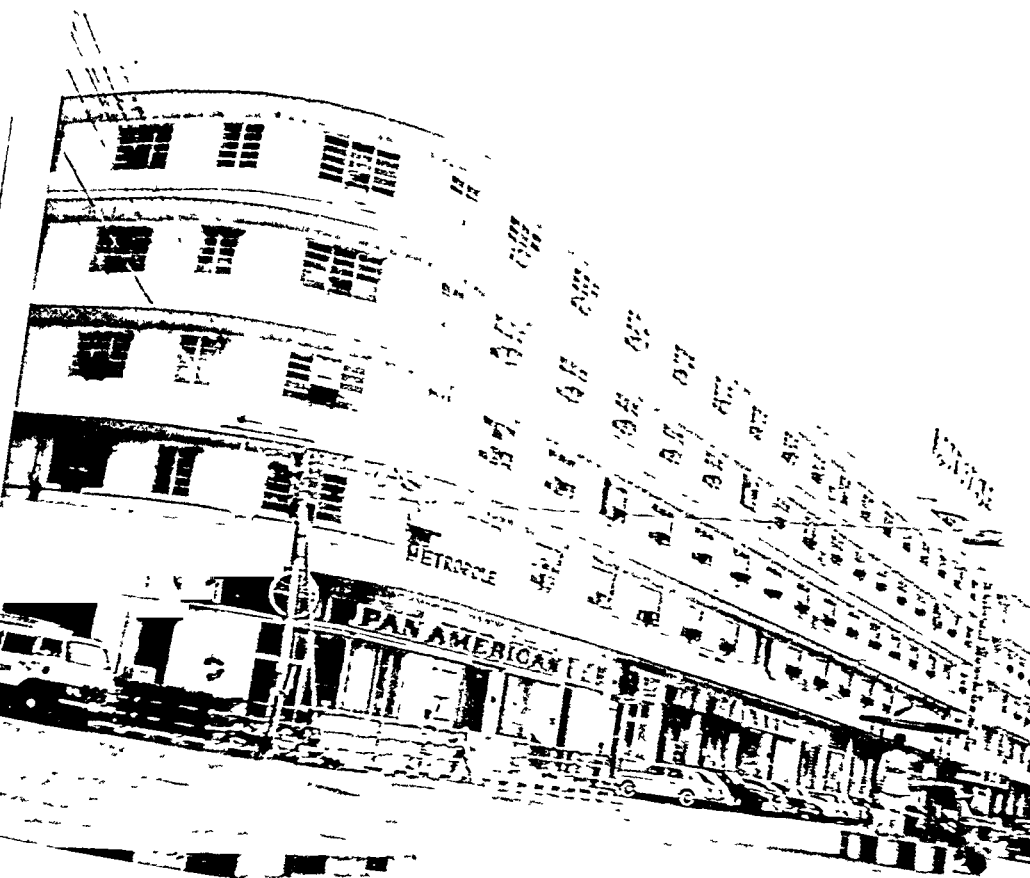
Church, in the Park.



Parsi Fire Temple, Saddar, Karachi.



Beach Luxury Hotel, Karachi, owned by a Parsi businessman.



Hotel Metropole, Karachi. another hotel owned by a Parsi businessman.



Jamshed Baugh, one of the newly-built residential areas of the Parsi Community in Karachi, West Pakistan.



Mother Louisa of the Catholic Mission, Shimolia, with a group of Christian children.



The late Shams-ul-Ulema Dr. Dastoor Dhalla, Parsi High Priest of Karachi.

we know nearly nothing. Scholars putting together tradition, folklore and scraps of historical facts have pieced together a conjectural picture of his life. But though the facts may be scanty, the spirit of the teacher and the principles of his doctrine have come down to us embodied in the *gathas*.

Ahura Mazda

The *gathas* show him to be a fearless man of strong individuality, filled with sympathy for all living things; an ecstatic, mystic devoted to the truth or Divine Light which he calls 'Ahura Mazda', the Good Mind. At the age of 30, according to tradition, Zoroaster began preaching openly his new and startling faith to a society which was superstitious and polytheistic. In place of a pantheon of gods and demons, Zoroaster preached the existence of a single supreme being *Ahura Mazda*. He is all pervading "Closer than the nose is to the ears, or the ears are to the mouth, is he to all that the corporal world thinks, speaks and does". The late Dr. Dastur Dhalla of Karachi, one of the greatest authorities on Zoroastrianism, writes: "Above all, *Ahura Mazda* is the spirit of spirits. This essential trait stands intact through all the changes in the concept of God. He is not invested with any anthropomorphic character. . . *Ahura Mazda* is synonymous with light as his opponent is identical with darkness, and the sun is spoken of as his most beautiful form".

The ancient Iranian Prophet was puzzled by the problem of evil. If *Ahura Mazda* is perfect, how can he either create evil or allow it to exist? To argue that God created evil in order that man may appreciate the value of good is, as the late Dr. Dastur Dhalla said "as unreasonable as saying that the Deity gives poison to mankind so that they may better understand and appreciate the value of the

antidote".

The *gathas*, therefore, maintain that God is not the source of evil, and postulate another inferior, but yet powerful spirit, *Ahriman*.

Ahriman

Ahriman is the origin and principle of evil. He is independent of, and co-exists with, *Ahura Mazda*. *Ahriman* brings death, disease and physical and moral deformity into the world. He is the contradiction of each good. Like Satan (whose prototype he is) he tempts man into his downfall and he benefits particularly by human ignorance. That ultimately *Ahura Mazda* will conquer, and truth stamp out that evil, is the faith of every believing Zoroastrian. In the meantime, however, the world is torn by a ceaseless conflict in which *Ahriman* opposes the complete realisation of good on earth. The individual in his thought, speech and action must decide for himself whether he will further the cause of good, and so help to bring the millennium closer, or whether he will postpone it by preaching evil. This is the crux of Zoroastrian ethics. Man is placed in a constant state of choice. His life presents a series of alternatives from which he must constantly and ceaselessly select.

The Zoroastrian placed in this dilemma of good and evil is exhorted to choose good. It was to guide man into this choice that Zoroaster believed he was sent. "Good thoughts, good words, good deeds" are watch-words of Zoroastrianism. Nevertheless, man is a free agent and no doctrinal pressure compels him to choose one side rather than another.

Accompanying the doctrine of free will is that of personal responsibility. The heavenly powers are cognizant of the good and evil deeds of each individual and these are weighed in balance

against each other after death. A man's ultimate fate depends entirely on himself and his choice of action from the opportunities that life offers him. Predestination or fatalism plays no part in Zoroastrian ethics.

A choice of good, however, does not imply complete self-renunciation. Zoroastrianism does not advocate asceticism in any form. Life is to be enjoyed as fully as is consistent with virtue. Contemplation is recommended only if it is accompanied by practical achievement. There should be no withdrawal from the world. The object of a man's life should be to see that his fellowmen have, as far as possible, a share of the goods of life, and to place social service before his personal desires. Only to those who give happiness to others does *Ahura Mazda* grant happiness.

Marriage and the rearing of a happy, virtuous family are to be preferred to celibacy. Life is a boon and man should find pleasure in a vigorous struggle to achieve his ideals. Vitality and endurance are especially recommended as two gifts for which man should pray to *Ahura Mazda*, for they enable man to bear his burden and to progress.

Benevolence, the practice of charity motivated by compassion, is strongly emphasised in Zoroastrian scriptures—a precept which the Parsis have always kept in mind and as their prosperity increased the sphere of their charitable work was correspondingly enlarged. But the most famed virtue of the ancient Persians was their love of truth. According to Herodotus, the Persian ideal of education was to teach a boy "to ride a horse, to bend the bow and to tell the truth". The *Avesta* reserves the most vigorous condemnation for the sin of lying or deceit. The importance of this virtue may be gauged from the

Arda Viraf, which tells of the punishments of a deceitful man after death.

A man who is unjust and takes bribes in this world, will have his eyes scooped out and tongue cut away in the next. Also "he will be torn by demons who keep back the good of the dogs of shepherds and householders". This reverence for and gentleness towards the animal creation is also characteristic of Zoroastrianism. Fair dealing in business is constantly emphasized. "He who has acquired wealth by crime and becomes glad thereby, that pleasure is worse for him than unhappiness". The modern Parsis, behaving in accordance with their religious precepts, have a strict regard and a reputation for justice and fair play in business. The sum total of a Zoroastrian's duty is *Asha* or righteousness. All the good elements in life must be encouraged to realize their potentialities and all evils suppressed or annihilated. Hence thrift, temperance, industry and moderation are the qualities essential to every true Zoroastrian.

Wedding Ceremony

Traditionally the most important events in the life of a Parsi are his *Navjot* and his wedding. The *Navjot* ceremony initiates the child into the Zoroastrian religion. At a public ceremony, the priest dresses the child in the *sudreh* or white cambric shirt, and over it the *Kusti*, a woollen thread is tied round the waist with four knots. The *sudreh*, always worn next to the skin, is symbolic of the purity or righteousness which a Zoroastrian must always wear. The *Kusti* is the distinguishing badge of the Parsi. Each knot of the *Kusti* has a special meaning, the whole symbolising the universal brotherhood of man.

The wedding ceremony is usually performed a little after sunset,

before an assembly of at least five persons, two of whom must be official witnesses. It is a long and colourful ceremony, but the modern tendency is to omit most of the traditional marriage customs. A modern Parsi marriage in Karachi consists only of the strictly religious, or essential part of the ceremony, that is, the consent of the couple which must be publicly given, and the benediction of the officiating priests.

New Year's Celebration

The biggest festival of the Parsis is their New Year which falls in early September. It is a day of rejoicing when even the poorest wear new clothes, and all visit the *Atash-Kadah* (Fire Temple) to give thanks. Special food is prepared for the occasion and visits paid. In Karachi, a fair is held on that day and the entire community has a chance of coming together. The proceeds are given for charitable purposes.

The Parsis owe their prosperity to the period when the British arrived in the sub-continent. When the British moved into Sind, Parsis came in as contractors and suppliers to the Army. The wine trade followed the British, and as Zoroastrianism does not place a prohibition on liquor, Parsis were the first wine-merchants. They opened a number of wine shops which sold not only liquor, but all articles imported from England. At that time, Karachi was little more than a fishing village, and the little urbanisation that existed was due mainly to the Parsis. The community, being small and industrious, flourished and as opportunities expanded, they urged their less prosperous fellows from the small towns of the Bombay Presidency to come and settle in Karachi. The newcomers found jobs mainly as small traders (as their names today indicate).

The 1947 economic situation drew yet larger numbers who were absorbed into the newly-established branches of commercial houses and banks. Much of the population of Karachi was built by the British. The Soldier and Civilian areas and much of the Cantonment area owe their development to the British and Canton was built by Sir John G. Kerr. The shipping industry and imports and exports trade have been largely so inclined by the British. The one of them to credit in Karachi owes to Municipal facilities to water supply, sanitation, health services and greater developments.

Paras Leaders

It is impossible indeed to mention the Karachi Paras, without calling to mind two outstanding personalities whose reputation extends far beyond the narrow bounds of the city. The first is Jamshed Nussewanji Mehta, a name familiar and dear to all the old inhabitants of Karachi and to many new ones. Jamshed, as he was always affectionately called, made Karachi made it one of the cleanest and best planned cities in Pakistan. Born of a rich business family, he inherited a large and prosperous concern, yet his life was a contradiction of the average businessman's ideals. He sat on innumerable committees. He encouraged co-operation in every sphere of public life, in banks, in housing societies, in schools, and in politics. He helped in establishing banks, maternity hospitals, schools and colleges. He supported the Buyers and Shippers Chamber, and the health and sanitation administration. There is no phase of public life with which Jamshed was not connected and which he did not try to improve or reform. He reorganised the Sind Municipality and was its Mayor for thirteen years. During his mayoralty, Karachi became an important naval base and airport and he and his councillors raised it

from the status of a town to that of a city.

But Jamshed was not only a utilitarian philanthropist. If his public life was dedicated to the service of man, his private life was a dedication to God. He was a devoted Theosophist without ceasing to be a devout Zoroastrian. His sense of humour and his warm humanity made him loved as well as respected. No one who went to Jamshed in trouble came back empty handed. When he died in 1952, Karachi mourned her most beloved son.

Dastur M. N. Dhalla, a scholar of international repute, was the High Priest of the Karachi Parsis. His book *History of Zoroastrianism* is considered to be the standard work on the subject. His interest extended beyond the bounds of one religion to all. His many publications testify that he was a scholar in the true sense of the word; a learned man and a humanitarian.

Philanthropy

Perhaps the most remarkable feature about the Parsi community—and therein lies their attraction for other communities—is that they regard their wealth as communal property. The ideals of the community and those of its religion are strongly socialistic. A rich Parsi will, as a matter of course, spend some and often a considerable part of his wealth for the betterment of the community. To work for the social welfare is considered highly meritorious, and the community places this virtue higher on their scale of values than scholarship or creative art. Nor is their social work confined only to their community welfare. Many a non-communal hospital, dispensary, child welfare centre and school was started and continues to be endowed by Parsis. To work for the good of his fellowman is for the modern Parsi, as for his ancestor, the *summum bonum* of Zoroastrianism.

ethics. We have only to look at the community's welfare schemes in Karachi, where nearly the total Parsi population of Pakistan is settled to see how this abstract ethic is made effective. There is a common adage among Parsis that "a Parsi may be born free of cost, educated free, married free and die free".

Socio-Cultural Organisations

Though small in number, Parsis are a well-organised community. They have their own, social, cultural and religious institutions which render useful service for the advancement of community life.

The Young Men's Zoroastrian Association is one of the most active institutions in the Parsi community. It runs a library and arranges lectures, debates and get-togethers for social and cultural advancement. Parsi girls and women learn sewing, knitting and embroidery in the Cowasji and Virbaiji Variawa Parsi Ladies Industrial Home. The Karachi Zarthoshti Banu Mandal holds sewing classes and also serves the poor members of the Parsi community by providing them with cloth, food, medicines etc. Karachi's Spencer's Eye Hospital owes its existence to the philanthropy of the late Dr. Kaikhusro Spencer.

The Karachi Parsi Institute, founded by late Mr. Padsha, aims to encourage sports amongst the community. To safeguard their interests, the Parsi priests in Karachi have formed an association known as the Karachi Athornan Mandal. The Katrak Hall, built by the late Sir Kavasji H. Katrak, is the hub of Karachi's social and cultural activities.

Educational Institutions

One third of the community's school-going children get free education. The two Parsi schools, the Mama Parsi Girls High School

and the Bai Virbaiji School for Boys have opened their doors to all communities. It is noteworthy that more than half of the members of this Parsi school are non-Parsi. This, in itself, testifies to the school's efficiency and high scholastic standard. Besides the usual academic curriculum, both schools run technical and vocational classes. The Domestic Science courses of the Mama School are well known for their excellent instructions and exacting standards.

Three trust funds, two of which were organised by Jamshed Nusserwanji, give grants and school fees to those families who cannot afford them. The demand for higher education is met by the Edulji Dinshaw foreign scholarships, and the Sir Jehangir Kothari Trust, which sees them through the local colleges.

There are also grants available to young people who want to get married but cannot afford the initial expenditure of the wedding and of setting up a home.

The Jamshed Memorial Fund was earmarked for building purposes and the Government of Pakistan have already provided a site which is the third Parsi Colony in Karachi. Under another scheme, about eighty families have built a colony on a co-operative basis.

Medical care is supplied by two hospitals, one of which, the Bomanshaw Minochee Homji General Hospital, enjoys the further advantage of free medical service from many of the city's eminent doctors. When all help fails, a fund is also provided for free services at funerals.

These funds are administered by the trustees of the community—the *Panchayat*. This body of five elders is elected in Karachi by an electorate of 60 votes who in turn are elected by the community. The electorate has four classifications of voters, according to the

contribution they make to the community funds.

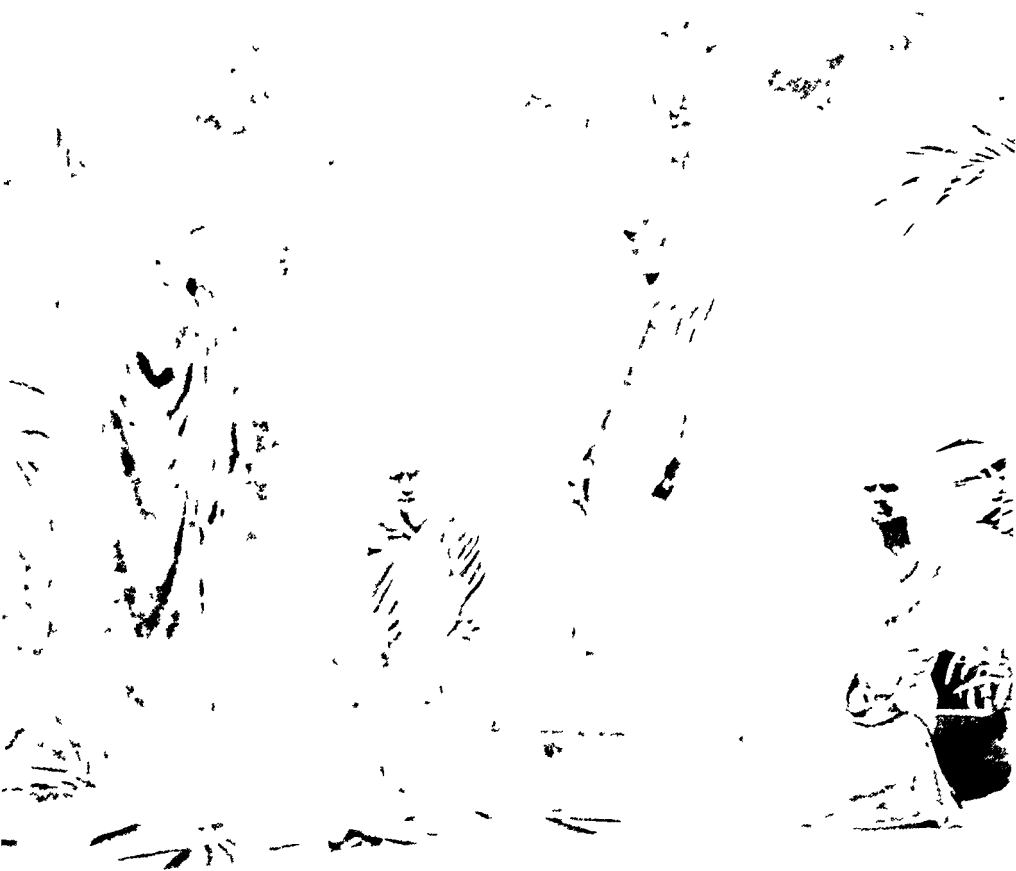
Parsis are taking increasing part in social, educational and commercial fields. They are doctors, teachers, social workers and Government employees. Mr. J. G. Kharas, a Parsi member of the Civil Service, is one of the Pakistan's Ambassadors abroad.

Parsi women have come forward to help in social service schemes, especially in the APWA—All Pakistan Women's Association. Notable among them is Mrs. Gool Minwalla, a zealous and indefatigable social worker who has represented Pakistan at many social and welfare conferences abroad, and does much good work at home. Parsi contributions both in money and effort towards the rehabilitation of refugees and the Jinnah Memorial Fund have not been lacking. For a minority community which differs in religion, culture and outlook from the majority, there is a margin of insecurity in some countries. But Pakistan has liberally extended a rightly Islamic tolerance and justice to all its minorities.

Maki Dhunjibhoy



Inside a Buddhist temple in East Pakistan.



Buddhist monks in an East Pakistan monastery.



A Buddhist Pagoda in Cox's Bazar, Chittagong, East Pakistan.



Gandhara frieze depicting the Miracle of Sravasti



Buddhist temple at Ramu in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, East Pakistan.



Inside view of a Buddhist temple, Chittagong Hill Tracts, East Pakistan.



A Buddhist High Priest from East Pakistan.



The Buddha in Dharma Chakra Mudra (Meditation), Gandhara Sculpture from Sahri Bahlol, West Pakistan. (2nd—3rd century A.D.).

BUDDHISTS IN PAKISTAN

Next to the Hindus, the Buddhists are the most important minority community in Pakistan. One significant fact about them is that the overwhelming majority of the Buddhist population of the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent is to be found in Pakistan, not in India, the country of origin of Buddhism. They even constitute the majority population in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in East Pakistan. The total number of Pakistani Buddhists is 376,312.

In their golden days, the Buddhists of the sub-continent held sway over vast empires and moulded the destiny of the land. It was Asoka who built up the greatest empire in India's history in the 3rd century B.C. It was Asoka, again, who brought out Buddhism from seclusion and made it a world religion. After him, the people of the sub-continent witnessed, through the ages, the rise and fall of three more Buddhist empires, the architects of which were Kanishka, Harshavardhana and the illustrious Pala Dynasty of Bengal. It was during their reign that Buddhism spread far and wide

in Tibet, China and South-East Asia.

From the 2nd century B.C., to the 12th century A.D., Buddhist rule has again and again alternated with Hindu rule in different regions of the sub-continent. Both political and religious wars were waged relentlessly by the Hindus against the Buddhists throughout these centuries. Ultimately Buddhism was almost eliminated as a religious force in the sub-continent. The only area where it has lingered on to this day as the faith of the majority people is in the district of Chittagong Hill Tracts in East Pakistan.

During its chequered career, Buddhism has left a rich heritage of art and architecture in East Pakistan. Many exquisite stone and metal images of Buddha and fine stone and terracotta plaques have been discovered from ancient ruins and preserved as valuable treasures in the museums of Pakistan. The most famous architectural remains of the Buddhist period so far discovered in East Pakistan are at Mahasthan and Paharpur.

Political Rights

The Buddhists in Pakistan have assumed considerable importance as a minority. During the British period, the Buddhists, other than the Tribal Buddhists of the district of Chittagong Hill Tracts, were classed with Hindus and were denied separate identity. They possessed no franchise. Consequently the Buddhist community as a whole had no political existence; they had no voice in the administration of the country, and no Buddhist was ever elected to any legislature.

Since the establishment of Pakistan, the Buddhists have made considerable strides in the political field. With the introduction of Basic Democracies in the country, Buddhists are members of Union

Councils, *Thana* Councils, Sub-divisional Councils, District Councils, Divisional Councils and the Provincial Assembly.

The Government included a Buddhist representative on the Minority Rights Advisory Committee of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly.

The Tribal Buddhists of East Pakistan, who constitute the majority of the Buddhist population of the country, enjoy a fair measure of administrative autonomy. There are among them three tribes, namely Chakma, Mong, and Bomong, each having a Chief of its own who administers almost all the tribal affairs, without much outside interference.

Economic Progress

The Buddhists have made considerable progress in the economic and cultural fields also. The Government of Pakistan have taken up the development of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, where the majority of the Pakistani Buddhists live. The big Karnaphuli Paper Mills are in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and so is the Karnaphuli Hydro-electric Project. New roads and bridges are being built, water-ways are being developed, and schools both technical and non-technical and other institutions for higher education are being established. The Kaptai Dam has opened a new chapter in the economic life of the tribal Buddhists. The artificial lake formed under the project has connected the hitherto inaccessible areas with the civilised world outside. New industries are growing up in the region, thus creating new opportunities for the tribal people.

Those who had to be evacuated due to the formation of the Karnaphuli Lake have since been rehabilitated and given lands and monetary grants

These and other industrial activities are opening up an era of economic prosperity for the region, offering new avenues of employment for the Buddhists and a new horizon of cultural growth. Hundreds of tribal children, whose parents are still leading semi-primitive life, are now getting modern education in schools which receive financial assistance from Government. Deserving students are awarded Government stipends.

Buddhists of the other areas are more advanced than the Buddhists living in the hills. Almost all the Buddhist localities have their own schools which receive monetary assistance from Government. The Government of East Pakistan make available every year a recurring grant of Rs. 84,000 to the special Buddhist Education Fund for distribution among the Pali schools, where Pali, the sacred language of the Buddhists, is taught, and also for distribution of stipends among deserving Buddhist students studying in the various schools, colleges and technical institutions of the Province. The Central Government allocates Rs. 100,000 per annum for the advancement of education amongst the Buddhists.

Monasteries and Temples

The Buddhists enjoy complete freedom in their religious activities. There are over 500 monasteries in East Pakistan where scriptures are studied and worship is offered to Lord Buddha. There are about 168 Buddhist temples in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. As is usual in respect of other minorities, Government show due regard for the religious sentiments of the community. One of the Buddhist monasteries of Chittagong was renovated in 1951 by the Government of Pakistan and a plot of land for the Kamelpur Monastery, Dacca, was also donated by the Government. The Government has

allocated a considerable amount of money for repairs to the Buddhist monasteries and temples damaged by the devastating cyclones which hit Chittagong in recent years.

Festivals

Buddhist festivals are observed chiefly in commemoration of the main events of Lord Buddha's life. The most important festival is *Baishakhi Purnima*, the full-moon day of *Baishakh*, the first month of the Bengali year (April-May). This is the day on which Lord Buddha was born; he also attained on this day Buddha-hood or Supreme wisdom, and *Mahaparinirvana*, that is, Great Salvation, after which there would be no rebirth and its attendant sorrows. The day is observed throughout the Buddhist world.

Asharhi Purnima, the full-moon day of the third month of the Bengali year (June-July), is observed in commemoration of the great Renunciation of Lord Buddha. This is the day on which Buddha, when still a Royal prince and the heir of his father's kingdom, forsook his princely station in quest of truth, knowledge and salvation for mankind. This is the day also on which he first enunciated his Doctrines after years of quest and meditation. The day marks the commencement of the Buddhist Lent, a period of meditation by monks lasting three months. After the period is over, the monks prepare themselves for specific missions. Ceremonial offerings of new robes are made to them during the next month, before they set out on their missions.

Other important festivals fall on *Maghi Purnima*, the full-moon day of the tenth month (January-February), and on the *Phalguni Purnima*, the full-moon day of the eleventh month of the Bengali year (February-March). On the former date, Lord Buddha resolved on the

Great Salvation on the following *Baishakhi Purnima* day, and on the latter date he returned to his father's kingdom after the period of his Great Renunciation.

Numerous fairs are held at different places on these and other important occasions, chiefly in the district of Chittagong. The biggest of the Buddhist fairs is held at Mahamuni for fifteen days at the end of each Bengali year (April). It is an Important event for the Pakistani Buddhists, when devotees from all parts of East Pakistan assemble here to pay homage to Lord Buddha.

Shachi N. Barua

